

of the coming transit of Venus in 1874 is Oahu, one of the Sandwich-Islands group. In an article in 'Nature' I have already put forward the view * that this would be a specially favourable opportunity for a thorough examination of the whole fauna and flora of the Hawaiian Archipelago. I now beg leave to direct the attention of the readers of 'The Ibis' to my published remarks on this subject, and to request their advice and assistance in carrying out my plans.

XXIX.—*Letters, Extracts from Correspondence, Announcements, &c.*

WE have received the following letters addressed to "The Editor of 'The Ibis'":—

Copenhagen, 25th March, 1871.

SIR,—Allow me to make an observation respecting a statement in your excellent article "On the Psittacidæ of Central America," in the last number of 'The Ibis.' It is there remarked that the *Ara macao* (L.) has not been sent from Mexico by any naturalist since the days of Deppe and Schiede. It may therefore interest you to learn that my late friend, the well-known botanist and Mexican traveller, Dr. Liebmann, brought back in 1843 a specimen of that species, which is still in the Copenhagen Museum. The exact locality where he got the bird is unfortunately not recorded; but Liebmann visited only two of the provinces of Mexico, viz. Vera Cruz and Oajaca, and in some sketches on the physical conditions and the vegetation of the Pacific Coasts of Mexico, which he published long ago in a Danish periodical, I find the remark that "Macaws" are abundant in the forests in the vicinity of Guatulco, on the western slope of the great Cordillera. The bird in question may therefore very likely have been obtained in these forests; and your suggestion that, if *Ara macao* really occurs in Mexico at all, it is only to be found in the forest-country on the Pacific side of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, seems so far quite justified.

Yours truly,

J. REINHARDT.

* 'Nature' for March 24, 1870.

Whitehall, Colchester, 28th April, 1871.

DEAR SIR,—I beg leave to offer a few remarks on Dr. Jerdon's supplementary Notes to 'The Birds of India,' in which he has done me the honour frequently to mention my name.

ΓΥΡΑËΤΟΣ ΒΑΡΒΑΤΟΣ.

I entirely concur with Dr. Jerdon and my friend Mr. Hume in considering this Vulture most nearly allied to the *Neophron*. I have had opportunities during several years of narrowly observing its habits at all seasons of the year, in the interior of the Himalayas, in the plains of the North Punjab, and in the Salt range; and I cannot believe what "it is said at times" to do in the way of "carrying off Pheasants, Chuckor Partridges, and occasionally young Lambs." I have never witnessed a sign of any attempt by it to carry off any living creature whatever; nor could I hear from any European observers, or from natives worth talking to on the subject, that their experience varied from my own. Moreover its *Neophron*-structure and movements are entirely at variance with these stories of its active rapacity, which I look upon as emanating from delusions of the ignorant. Captain Cock, now Station Staff Officer at Thelum, in the Salt range, took the eggs from a nest in the lower ranges of the Himalaya, two marches from Rawul Pindee.

FALCO PEREGRINUS.

I think it is beyond doubt that no instance of the breeding of this Falcon has occurred within the limits of British India. My careful inquiries among natives of rank, as well as among professional falconers and birdcatchers, during a recent sojourn of more than three years and a half in Peshawur and its vicinity, lead me to believe that it does not breed even so near India as Swat, Bonair, Cabul in Affghanistan, or in any of the neighbouring hill-countries.

FALCO PEREGRINATOR. }
FALCO ATRICEPS. }

I hardly understand Dr. Jerdon's statement that "another species of Falcon appears to have been mistaken for it" (speaking of *F. peregrinator*) "both by Mr. Hume and Col. Delmé Rad-

cliffe." Mr. Hume and I were at issue on the subject of an alleged species distinct from *F. peregrinator*, which he proposed to call *F. atriceps*. It appears to me that, if there is any distinction between the race from Northern India and that from Central and Southern India, the difference is only a local one, in a species not migratory, and breeding over a very large tract of country, and is insufficient to constitute two species. In the many examples I have had, living, dead, or as skins (principally, it is true, from Northern or North-western India), I have had specimens differing widely from each other, yet hardly so considerably as I have often seen in the case of a lot of living Peregrine Falcons all before me at one time, say from 15 to 25, and all captured or taken from the nest in the British Isles. Experienced falconers are able to point out among a lot of young Falcons the individuals which have been taken from eyries from which they have been in the habit of receiving young birds, while the uninitiated observer will frequently inquire, on seeing two Falcons sitting together, "Are these two of the same species?" the contrast is so great. A small close-feathered "black" Falcon with a short tail is a very different-looking bird from a large loose-feathered "white" Falcon; and the varieties in colour and make among a lot are endless. I have now two Falcons sitting on the lawn here; and nearly every person who sees them asks if they are of one species. I remember that in letters, as well as during a visit to me at Attock last year, Mr. Hume dwelt upon the *shade of blue* in the upper plumage of adult birds, claiming for his *F. atriceps* a browner shade, as distinct from what he termed the Peregrine blue. Now Peregrines, in adult plumage, like Shaheens, are of very varied shades of blue. Moreover, in observing this blue shade, very strict regard must be had to the time elapsed since moulting in each specimen; for this blue shade is evanescent, more or less, and the sun of India and wind and weather will cause a Falcon, wild or tame, to present a very different appearance in March to that she presented in October of the preceding year. However blue she may have been in October, she will have lost a good deal of it for a browner shade by March. So I regard this blue shade as a very treacherous guide, equally with other alleged differences.

I have besides seen some Shaheens in North-west India, notably one that I caught at Futtchghur, on the Ganges, in 1866, quite as blue as any Peregrine of the dark variety I ever met with. While on the subject of local differences between birds of one species, I may mention that I know of two parishes in Hertfordshire adjoining one another, in which the Partridges (*Perdix cinerea*) differ so considerably that after a day's shooting an experienced eye will separate the birds according to the ground they were killed on. One of these parishes contains hilly ground with light chalky soil; the other lies low, and the soil is heavy clay.

I do not see that the Australian Falcon, *F. melanogenys*, is allied to *F. peregrinator*. It is considerably larger, with the proportions of the Peregrine, not the large beak and feet of *F. peregrinator* and *F. babylonicus*. With regard to the curious Bat-killing habit of the Shaheens, it is to be noticed that they do not kill them to eat; and I have seen a hungry Shaheen refuse them. I have frequently seen *F. peregrinator* and *F. babylonicus*, after taking perch for the night with distended crops, dashing off again and again after a Bat, returning in a minute or so with it in the feet to the perch, and soon dropping it dead below, till darkness put at end to their sport. Except in the case of one tiercel Peregrine, which when flying at the lure one evening at Moradabad, suddenly left the lure to make some fifty stoops at a passing Bat, I never saw a Peregrine, wild or tame, look at a Bat; and at the time this tiercel was very keen, and eager to fly at any thing he might see.

FALCO SACER.

I concur with Dr. Jerdon in believing that this Falcon is never seen in Cashmere. I could not hear of it in that country. The Falcon alluded to by Dr. Jerdon, about which I wrote to him, was certainly larger than any Cherrug I ever saw; and at the time I had this one I had many large Cherrugs in my possession. She was marked all over the upper parts and back exactly like a female Kestrel; her breast was white, with few markings on the sides, and a very few bell-shaped spots. The present Ameer of Cabul, Shere Ali, informed me that *F. sacer*

frequently breeds in Afghanistan, and offered to send me some nestlings. As this Falcon is no favourite of mine, I declined the offer; but he sent down some to the Regiment of Guides quartered at Hoti Murdan, and these birds were flown with success at ravine-Deer.

FALCO BABYLONICUS.

This Falcon is very highly prized about Rawul Pindee, Peshawur, Euzussaie, and Kohat (it is flown from the air at Ducks); and I have lately had some very good Hawks of this species. The old Falcon alluded to as belonging to Captain Griffiths was fifteen years old when I saw her in fine flying order at Peshawur, her previous owner having moulted her seven times, and she had moulted seven times in Captain Griffith's possession. She was a perfect game-Hawk. I ought not to have said that I had seen some examples of this Falcon with heads "as red as in *F. chicquera*," but "nearly as red." But there are always grey markings, more or less, through the rufous, however strong the rufous colour may be. One adult bird which I brought home alive from India last December in beautiful plumage, has much grey marking through the rufous on the head; but probably this year there will be less of the grey. She is in high health and beauty, and has begun to moult.

FALCO SEVERUS.

This beautiful little Falcon (not noticed as yet by Dr. Jerdon in his Supplementary Notes) I find mentioned in my memoranda as bearing apparently the same relation to *F. subbuteo* that *F. peregrinator* does to *F. peregrinus*. It is local, while *F. subbuteo* is migratory; its colouring is deeper, and its feet and beak are stronger than in *F. subbuteo*, in a degree exactly corresponding with the differences as to colours and proportions between the two larger Falcons.

I observed exactly the corresponding differences between *Cuculus himalayanus* and *C. canorus*. It seems very curious that, in addition to their Hawk-like markings, Cuckoos should resemble the Hawks in these respects also. I was reminded of my remarks the other day on looking at a beautiful adult specimen of *F. severus*, now in the hands of Mr. Edwin Ward, which

I shot at Futtchghur in 1866. I found this species breeding in the Himalaya in 1860, and got young birds unable to fly.

ACCIPITER MELANOSCHISTOS.

I find it very difficult to recognize any distinction between this bird and *A. nisus*, the latter being subject in Europe (where, I suppose, *A. melanoschistos* is not admitted to be found) to great variations of size and colour. Native falconers of India do not admit two species of Basha, as *A. nisus* is called by them, though they are much given to distinguishing varieties, and enumerate more Shaheens than we do.

Yours truly,

E. DELMÉ RADCLIFFE,

Lt.-Col. 88th C. R.

St. Helena, 15th Nov. 1870.

SIR—Several attempts have been made at various times to introduce new birds into this island, and I hope that some short account thereof may not prove uninteresting.

The island-records state that on the 18th of November, 1824, English singing birds were introduced: whether they succeeded for a time or not, no further record appears. Some of the inhabitants say that Blackbirds did succeed upon that occasion; if so, their existence here must have been for a short time only. From the same source we learn that, in the year 1852, Thrushes, Blackbirds, Larks, and Starlings, and in 1853 South-American Mocking birds were introduced. None of these proved successful. What were the causes of failure it is now impossible to tell; I believe, however, that non-success arises chiefly from turning the birds loose in cold wet weather when they have been much weakened by confinement during a long sea-voyage—and also that in their weak state they easily become a prey to cats and rats, which abound in the island.

Through the kindness of Mr. E. L. Layard, who sent me the birds from the Cape of Good Hope, three Cape-Pheasants (*Francolinus clamator*) were let loose here in June 1865, and also several Cape-Partridges (*Francolinus afer*) were turned out in the early part of the year 1867. Unfortunately neither of

these attempts succeeded, and, I believe, for the following reasons: in the first instance, extremely wet cold weather set in immediately after the birds were liberated, and, continuing through a long period, proved too trying for them to survive it in a strange land; in the second instance, the birds arrived here at the commencement of the Pheasant-shooting season; it was thought advisable to keep them until the season should be over, in order to avoid the chance of their being shot; they suffered through the confinement, and doubtless, when turned loose, were unable, in their weakened state, to cope with the difficulties which a new country must at first present.

In the month of September 1868, Mr. George Moss, of this island, introduced from Europe a cage containing seventeen Larks. These were in good condition when set loose at "Plantation," the governor's residence, and were subsequently seen; but no very recent report of them has been received: this makes it doubtful if they still exist here, although it is possible. The same gentleman also tells me that about twenty years ago he set loose some Pondicherry Quails; but none are now to be found in the island. He also confirms the report recently given to me by bird-catchers, that the true Canary (*Crithagra canaria*) is now to be seen in a wild state here.

A cage of common Indian Grey Quails was sent to the island by Mr. Andrew Anderson, arriving here on the 20th April, 1869. I was absent from the island at the time, but am told on good authority that the birds were in good condition, though somewhat weak in the wing through confinement. They were set loose at "The Briars," but have not since been seen. I fear it is probable that they fell victims to cats and rats.

With a view to introducing here some enemy to the White Ant insects (*Termes tenuis*), which are most destructive to house and other property situated in Jamestown, I brought with me, on returning to the island from England on the 1st November last year, a cage of English birds containing seven Blackbirds, six Thrushes, twenty-six common London Sparrows, five Green Linnets, and one Starling; during the voyage each bird was in a separate compartment of the cage, excepting the Sparrows and Linnets; and being a fellow-passenger with them I was able to

exercise more than ordinary care on their behalf. They were set loose on the same day at "Plantation," a situation about 1500 feet above the sea, clothed with thick vegetation; fine weather fortunately continued, after they were liberated, for some length of time. It is now a little more than a year since; and the introduction promises success. The Blackbirds and Thrushes have kept to the same locality; occasionally one or the other may be seen flying about in the thickets of Oak and Pine trees; and the song of the Thrush, as well as the Blackbird's notes, are to be heard in the neighbourhood, recalling pleasant home-associations. As a proof that these birds are breeding, it may be mentioned that in May last (the autumn here) a Blackbird's nest, containing four eggs, was seen in the woods at Plantation, and at the present time (spring) a Thrush is sitting upon four eggs in the same locality. It is interesting to note that these birds have kept to the wooded part of the island where they were set loose, while the Sparrows, finding it too unsociable a spot, have migrated over three or four miles to that part where vegetation is more scarce, but houses and human beings more abundant. Not a Sparrow is now to be seen near the place where they were let out originally; but at "Ladder Hill," a barren rocky situation on the sea-coast, at an elevation of 600 feet, where soldiers' barracks, stables, &c. exist, they are to be seen in flights of five or six. Also on the outskirts of Jamestown, adjacent to Ladder Hill, they may be seen daily hopping about the roadways just as much at home as if they were in the London streets. There can be no doubt that the Sparrow is now well established in the island, and that in time it will prove a very valuable introduction to a place like this, where insects are so very destructive. It is somewhat remarkable that the Sparrows appear to have selected for their head quarters at present a barren, rocky, unfrequented valley, situated about a mile to the westward of Ladder Hill and Jamestown; from this they visit the latter places during the daytime in search of food and water.

Of the Linnets I am unable to give a report just yet; owing to their similarity in shape and colour to the female bird of the local Canary (*Crithagra butyracea*), at a distance it is difficult

to distinguish one from the other; there is good reason, however, for thinking that they are doing well and are associating with the island-Canary. Very recently, I believe that I saw and heard one of them; others have told me that they have heard their note. What is the fate of the solitary Starling, which was let out with the others, I know not; its companion escaped at sea, on the voyage out, could not be recaptured, and most probably perished.

Yours, &c.,

J. C. MELLISS.

New York, 13 March, 1871.

DEAR SIR,—I cannot agree with you and Mr. Scater that my *Porzana guatemalensis* and *Porzana concolor* are identical. I will endeavour to point out how they differ. I have two fine specimens of *Porzana castanea* from Brazil, and one of *P. concolor* from Jamaica, which do not appear to differ: therefore I agree with you as to their identity. But all are much larger than the dimensions given in your monograph, the three being very uniform in their measurements, which are as follows:—*P. concolor*. Length 10 in., wing $5\frac{1}{8}$, tail $2\frac{1}{2}$, tarsi $1\frac{5}{8}$; bill from front, following the curve, $1\frac{3}{16}$, from rictus to tip $1\frac{3}{16}$.

Now my *P. guatemalensis* measures:—Length 8 in., wing $4\frac{5}{8}$, tail $2\frac{1}{4}$, tarsi $1\frac{3}{8}$, bill from tip to front and to rictus 1.

The specimens of *P. concolor* are much alike in colour, one from Brazil rather lighter below than the other two; but none are so dark as my species, which is of a cinnamon-brown above, and of a deeper reddish-chestnut below; the wings are of a much brighter colour in *P. concolor*. Although the two have a general resemblance to one another in colour, the larger size, longer and stronger bill of *P. concolor* readily establish the distinction of *P. guatemalensis* as a species.

Yours, &c.,

G. N. LAWRENCE.

[The dimensions, as given in our monograph, of *P. concolor*, taken from Gosse's type in the British Museum are as follows:—

Length 8·5, wing 4·8, tail 2·6, tarsi 1·7, bill 1·1. Those of

three skins in our collection, omitting the total length (of little value when taken from a skin) :—

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|---------------------|---------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 1. From Bahia | wing 5, | tail 2·4, | bill 1·1, | tarsi 1·7. |
| 2. " " | 4·7, | 2·4, | 1·1, | 1·7. |
| 3. " Guatemala, | 4·25, | 2·4, | 1·1, | 1·5. |

Comparing these measurements with those given above by Mr. Lawrence, we must still doubt the possibility of differentiating the Guatemalan bird from *P. concolor* on the ground of size alone, though two of the Guatemalan birds have shorter wings, and one of them a shorter bill. As regards colour, Mr. Lawrence shows that variability exists in his Brazilian specimens; the same appears in ours from Bahia; so that here again we have no very trustworthy character. Apart from these considerations, we think that from the fact of the same species being found in Jamaica, Honduras, and Brazil there are *à priori* grounds for hesitating to admit the existence of a second nearly allied species in Guatemala of one of this wandering, widely-ranging genus of birds.—ED.]

Mr. T. T. Cooper's recently published volume of Travels in China* gives an interesting account of his meeting with Bishop Chauveau, the original discoverer of so many rare Phasianidæ at the mission-station of Ta-lin-pin, in the mountains of Western Szechuan. Here Mr. Cooper states that he "secured himself against a scarcity of food" by stocking his larder with "Pheasants of the Lady Amherst species (*Thaumalea amherstiae*)"†. These birds, we may remark, have been recently sold alive in England for £160 a pair!

The following extract is from a letter addressed to Mr. Selater by Dr. J. Anderson, F.Z.S., dated India Museum, Calcutta, April 27th, 1871.

"I have got a splendid lot of Persian birds, but have not had time to do more than glance at them. It is interesting to know that some of the Indian species, such as *Coracias indicus*, *Merops*

* Travels of a Pioneer of Commerce, &c. London: Murray, 1871. 1 vol.

† *Op. cit.* p. 182.

viridis, *Alcedo bengalensis* and *Halcyon rudis*, extend as far west as Shiraz with little or no variation. A number of the specimens in the collection came from the shores of the Caspian Sea; but the majority were collected on the main road from the Caspian to the Persian Gulf, in longitude 50° to 52° east, and at all elevations from 8000 feet to the level of the sea.

“Capt. St. John, under whom the Museum collector was placed, informs me that ‘on the shores of the Caspian the country is covered with dense semitropical jungle, swarming with Tigers, Pigs, and the Asiatic *Cervus* (i.e. *C. maral*); the lofty chain of the Elburz, quite barren on its southern slopes, separates the tableland of Persia from the Caspian. From its watershed to the slopes of the hills bounding the Persian Gulf the country and fauna are identical, long barren valleys, divided by equally barren hills, supporting flocks of Ibex, Mouflon, and Gazelle. Most of the birds are from this central plateau. The hills sloping to the Gulf are moderately clad with forest, principally oak, hawthorn, and wild fruit-trees. In the jungles Lions are not uncommon. Below the hills the fauna is more Indian or, perhaps, Scindian.’”

The additions to the Aviaries of the Zoological Society of London during the past few weeks comprehend specimens of several new or little-known species of birds. Amongst these may be noticed as of special interest:—a new Lory allied to the Ceram Lory, which Mr. Sclater has named *Lorius tibialis*; a very rare Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus mitchelli*), of which only one example was previously known; a pair of the beautiful Goose of the Bolivian and Chilian Andes (*Bernicla melanoptera*); a second pair of the small white Swan of Antarctic America (*Cygnus coscoroba*); a pair of Turtledoves from the atoll of Aldebra, north of Madagascar, which appear to belong to a new species of the group allied to *Turtur picturatus*; and an *Aquila*, from Fow-chow, in China, in the striated plumage hitherto usually referred to the young of *Aquila imperialis*, but which Mr. Howard Saunders has lately attempted to show must belong to a distinct species.